

2.3 Stuart Creek Impact Area Prescribed Burn, YTA

USAG-AK has proposed to burn 4031 acres in the Yukon Training Area (YTA), Fort Wainwright (Figure 4). The proposed prescribed burn is composed of three units. The project area is located off of Brigadier and Skyline Roads, as well as the road to Camera Site I in the central portion of the YTA (map quadrangles XBD C-6 T. 2 S., R. 6 E., Sec. 27-28, 32-34; T. 3 S., R. 6 E., Sec. 4-9, 17 and XBD C-5 T. 2 S., R. 6 E. Sec. 11-14, 23-26). The majority of the proposed burn area is located in the Stuart Creek Impact Area, an area that has not undergone cultural resources surveys due to the high risk to personnel from unexploded ordnance. The purpose of the proposed burn is to reduce fine fuel materials and prevent large scale uncontrolled burns. The area has been subject to fires throughout history as part of the natural environment and no ground disturbance is planned as part of this burn.

Survey and Field Methods

In the summer of 2002 a portion of burn unit #3, which extends below the southern boundary of the Stuart Creek Impact Area, was investigated by an archaeological survey crew, employed by the Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands (CEMML, Colorado State University). This survey was part of a larger cultural resources investigation for other range developments. This work was supervised by William Hedman.

Parallel pedestrian transects spaced at 10-20 meters were walked in all areas that were not deemed too wet or too steep ($>40^\circ$) to contain cultural material. Systematic sub-surface testing was undertaken in areas determined to be high probability (e.g., lake margins, ridges, benches adjacent to steeper slopes) during initial review of the proposed project area, and as determined by the supervising archaeologist and field crew leader based on survey findings. Shovel tests were approximately 40cm x 40cm, and were screened through $\frac{1}{4}$ " hardware cloth. Additionally, of the portion of unit #3 that is located outside of the Stuart Creek Impact Area, approximately 263 acres have not been archaeologically surveyed. Though prehistoric cultural resources may exist in this portion of unit #3, based on previous cultural resources inventory and literature review regarding the Yukon Training Area, USAG-AK has determined that this area is has a very low probability of containing historic era cultural resources. It is located in high and rugged terrain, is not in the vicinity of any known resources such as mineral deposits and is not adjacent to any significant water sources.

The remainder of the proposed burn project is located within the boundaries of the Stuart Creek Impact Area. This dedicated impact area has been used for decades for live fire training and the dropping of live ordinance. This area is off limits to personnel who are not specially trained in ordinance disposal and other hazardous materials. As a result, cultural resource investigations did not take place in the impact area.

Cultural Resources

There is one known site located within the project area:

XBD-00162

Latitude:

Longitude: (NAD 27)

Determination: Not evaluated

This site consists of one black chert flake found on a hilltop in an extensively disturbed area. The flake was not collected. The Bureau of Land Management originally located this site and the agency's assessment of it was that the flake was an isolated find from a site that had likely been destroyed by military activities. This site is currently located within the boundaries of proposed burn unit #3 and within the boundaries of the Stuart Creek Impact area. The UTM coordinates for the site are: Zone 6, (WGS 84).

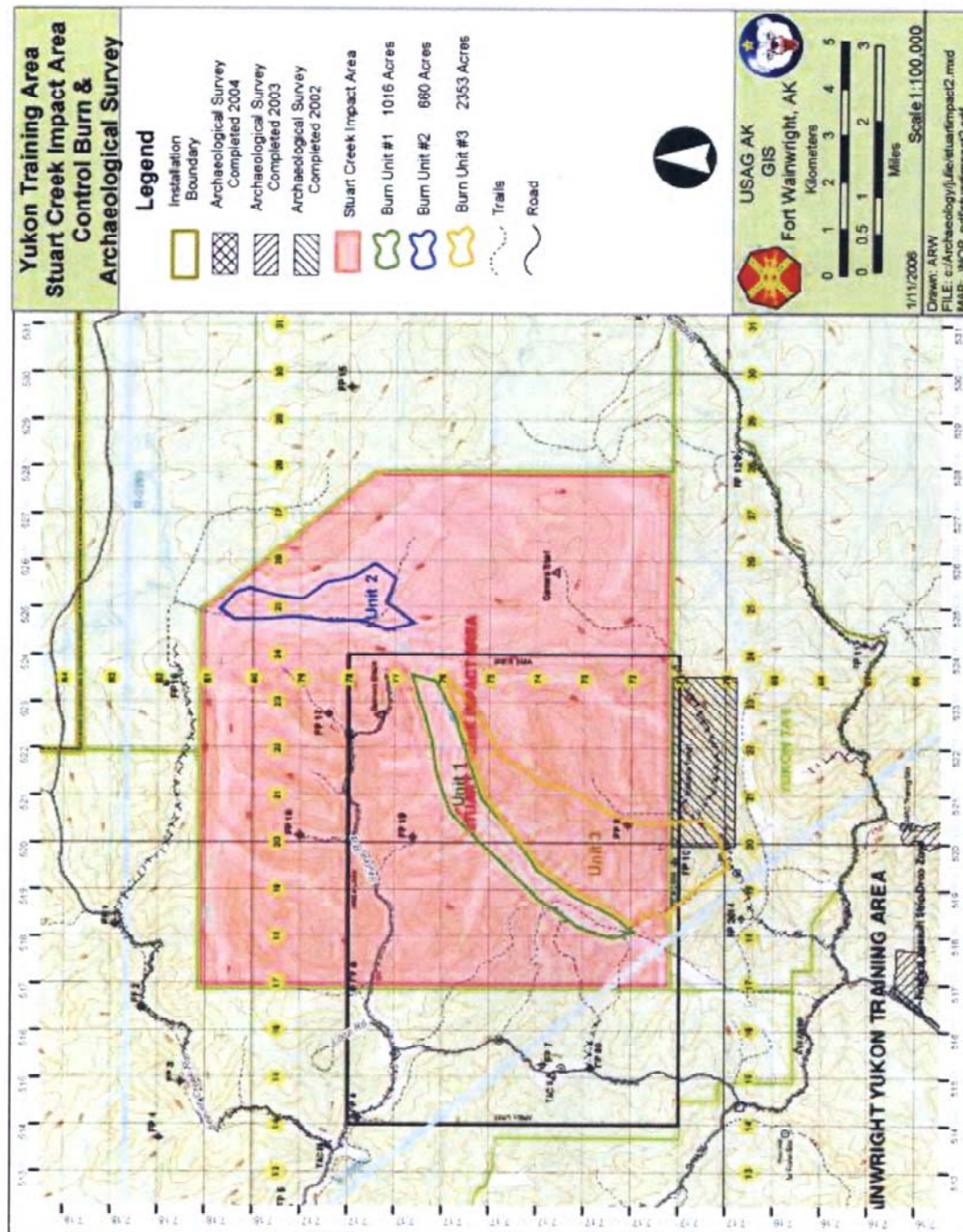


Figure 4. Stuart Creek Impact Area prescribed burn project area

Recommendations

This site has not been evaluated for its eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Because this site is located within a dedicated impact area, the Stuart Creek Impact Area, it will not be physically visited to determine its eligibility. The burning of vegetation around and within the boundaries of a prehistoric archaeological site is not likely to cause an adverse effect. The Yukon Training Area, including the vicinity of this archaeological site, has likely burned many times throughout history and prehistory as a result of wildfires. Additionally, based on the original Bureau of Land Management observations of the site, it has been destroyed and no longer retains any integrity, and would therefore not likely be eligible for the National Register under Criterion D or any other Criteria. The proposed project will not have an adverse effect on XBD-00162 and no further action at this site is recommended under the proposed burn plan.

Results

A combination of literature review, pedestrian survey and sub-surface testing of the proposed project area identified one unevaluated cultural resource. Site XBD-00162, a prehistoric archaeological site, lies within the boundaries of proposed burn unit #3 and the Stuart Creek Impact Area. The proposed prescribed burn project will have no adverse effect on XBD-00162. All other previously recorded archaeological sites or historic properties in the Yukon Training Area fall outside of the proposed project area. USAG-AK determined that no historic properties will be affected by the proposed project.